

December 2016

Issue 15

Upcoming Events

- 23 December–6 January: Christmas Break
- 9 January—Exceptional School Closure Day (Staff in-service—no school for students)
- 10 January—Students return to school
- 20-24 February: Midterm Break
- Parent –Teacher Meetings are suspended for the moment due to ASTI Industrial action



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Ballymahon
Co. Longford**

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ASD Unit

2016 brought with it a new adventure for Mercy Secondary School Ballymahon, the opening of an ASD Special class. In February the school was approached by the Department of Education, asking the school to consider opening the class. Having studied the area of Autism for a number of years I was very excited at the prospect of our school pioneering the venture in Ballymahon. Once the special class was ratified by the DES I began the process of setting up the class. First of all we needed to establish where the class would be in the school as we wanted it to be part of our mainstream building, where

our students would be free to move in and out of special class with the mainstream students. Unfortunately our school is limited on space, so we borrowed a classroom from the SEN Department until our new classroom would be built. I am delighted to be able to report that our new purpose build temporary classroom is ready this week, a welcome Christmas present for all our teachers and students.

Special class caters for six students and has two dedicated SNA's to help with all our learning and activities. Our students attend a number of mainstream classes and special classes.



Our special class students' day out in Mullingar

weather we have managed to make it to the park every week since September. On the 7th of December we had our Christmas outing to Mullingar, where we had a fun time bowling and enjoying the activity centre in Jungle Joes. On the 18th December we made Christmas dinner and had a Christmas party in our classroom. All our students, teachers and SNA's, along with our Principal, Ms. Donohue and Deputy-Principal Mr. Walsh, sat down to a fabulous dinner cooked by the students themselves. We had all the trimmings and the Christmas cracker jokes went down very well with everyone!!!

Special class has changed school for five students, who now learn in the same environment as all their friends, the only difference is they do it with support. Our students in Special Class would like to wish everyone in or school a very Happy Christmas and New Year, as we look forward to exciting times in 2017.

Ms. Rachel Ryan

Students Council

The student Council elections took place on Monday 12th September. There are 23 members, one representing each class group. Officers were elected following a workshop on 17/10/16 namely;

Kate Beirne (chairperson), Conor English and Ciara Healy (PRO), Kevin Manning and Niamh Hanley (secretaries).

Several reps. attended the Comhairle na nOg AGM in Longford. Michael Mensah (2nd year) got elected on to the Longford branch.

Students have been busy organising the Best Buddy scheme between 6th years and 1st years, helping to keep our notice board up to date and planning fundraisers for the new year all the while having meetings every fortnight discussing issues affecting students in school.



6th year student council reps.: Conor English (PRO), Kate Beirne (chairperson), Kevin Manning (secretary).

Green School Committee

The work of the Green Schools Committee in changing and improving how the school disposes of its waste continues. Since its inception, our school has almost doubled the weight of recycled waste being collected between 2015 and 2016 with significant cost savings already identified. Everyone in our school community has a huge part to play in helping to recycle as much litter as possible by using the proper transparent bins located throughout the school. The Committee's slogan is "Be seen to get green!"

Voluntary Contribution = Only €1.50 per week per family

We ask each family to contribute €50 as a Voluntary Contribution. This is instead of an Admin Fee for students. This money is used to help cover some of the costs of photocopying; materials needed for different subjects e.g. Home

Economics, Art, and Science etc. It helps cover costs of texting service and online payments system. We are conscious of costs for parents and we keep this in mind when planning. Eg. we do not make any profits from the sale of the Student Journal; students are not charged for specialist speakers-Michael Bond on Study Skills for 5th and 6th year students. Only €5 is collected from senior students to pay for hire of locker. This money is used to repair lockers and buy new lockers

each year as the school population increases in size. A token €2 is collected for Retreats. €5 is collected for buses to games which does not cover the full cost of the bus by any means. Fees charged for Mocks exams are low in comparison to other schools. The cost of our excellent TY programme is supplemented from school funds. We thank the parents who have paid so far this year and encourage more to do so. It is never too late to pay.



Patrick Flanagan receiving J.P. McManus Award in UL. Photo source: RTE News.

Past Pupils Achievements

Congratulations to past pupils, Charlotte Madden and Patrick Flanagan who received the Entrance Scholarship Awards to UCD in November. Patrick Flanagan also received the J.P. McManus Award.

Also congrats to Conor Beirne who received a Naughton Scholarship in October.

Through My Eyes Show

Thanks to everybody who attended the Show and all our TY year students who worked so hard behind the scenes to make it such a success. The entire school community, have thoroughly enjoyed the experience. This production brought a great buzz to the school. We sincerely thank, Ms. Malone, Mr. Burke, Mr. Larkin and Mr. Broderick, who facilitated the production of 'Through My Eyes', an experience which we will never forget.

Thanks to all staff members who helped with different tasks to ensure that the Show ran smoothly.

We also thank our sponsors for their generosity in donating funds and spot prizes. We hope this show lived up to expectations.



Through My Eyes TY Show



Table Quiz Fundraiser



Parents Council Fundraiser Table Quiz

Thanks to the Parents Council for their work in organising the very successful fundraising table quiz in October. Thanks to quiz masters Tommy and Ray for their work and to Katie Gallagher, accompanied by Paul Prior and to Caillte for their entertainment. A great night was had by all. Well done to the Kilbane family who won first prize of €200 with 92 points. €4514 was collected which will go towards School maintenance needs.

Team Hope Christmas Shoe Box Appeal

This is a fabulous project to be involved in as we approach Christmas and think of others who are less fortunate. Our students donated an incredible 80 shoe boxes this year.

Our first years held a big Bake Sale to cover the cost of transporting the boxes. A huge effort was made from making posters to baking and running the event which raised a total of €295. Thanks to Ms. Daly, Ms. Brady, Ms. Ryan, Ms. Bruton and Ms. Towey for their help and guidance.



Thank you to the following people for their contribution to our Newsletter:

Ms. Josephine Donohue, Mr. Micheál Walsh, Mr. Gerry Griffin, Ms. Kate Bohan, Ms. Carr, Ms. Ryan, Ms. Minogue, Ms. Bruton, Mr. Seery, Mr. Burke, Mr. Dempsey, Mr. Broderick, Mr. Bohan, Michael Conlan (photos), Shelley Corcoran (photos).

A special thanks to Cian Belton, Kian Gilmore, Jamie Bermingham, Oran Kenny, Aoife Kavanagh, Emer Tyrrell, Niamh Hanley and Aisling McCormack for their dedication in writing the Mercy Ballymahon notes every week.

Transition Year Activities

Transition Year 16/17 is the biggest group our school has ever had. We have 96 T.Y. students this year, divided into four classes. Each group change timetable four times in the year, so that all students get an opportunity to avail of all the subjects available. Apart from the core subjects of English, Irish, Maths, Religion, P.E, French/Spanish, students get taster classes in optional subjects Accounting, Business, Economics, Agricultural Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geography, History, Home Economics, Art, Music and Technology. In addition to those subjects students get to take courses in Logic, Work Experience, Mini-company, Personal Development, Chinese, Fencing, Digital Media, Information Technology, Photography, Health Education, SPHE, Development Education, Mindfulness, Self Defence, Pilates, Calligraphy, Artistic appreciation, Wood/Crafts, Literature Studies and Cultural Studies. This is indeed a wonderful opportunity for our students to broaden their horizons!



TY debating team during Wits Regional Final this month.

As always, rotas of T.Y students visit our local Convent House Day Centre to link in with our senior citizens and to help out in general. They also help out at the Homework Club at the Bridgeways Family Resource Centre.

At the beginning of the year, students went to Lilliput for the annual "bonding day". Our students had a great day canoeing, zip-lining, wading through the drains on the obstacle course and generally, having fun together.

Helen Emmerson, AWARE, delivered a "Beat the



Through My Eyes TY Show

Blues" programme to each of our TY groups. This workshop introduced our students to the importance of taking care of their mental health.

Later in September, Alan Devine, delivered a full day workshop on public speaking to all of our students. They were encouraged to stand tall, to own their space and to deliver their message to their TY group.

Sadie Wheatley, mini-company mentor, funded by the Local Enterprise Office, visits our students from time to time, encouraging the entrepreneurs among our TY group to start their own businesses. More about

these next issue!

Ms. Selina Lindsay, Youth Connect came to speak with our students about their rights in the workplace. Youth Connect is the young version of the ICTU. This talk ensured our students entered the workplace knowing their rights. And... their teachers ensured they knew their responsibilities!

The annual TY trip to the Backstage to witness Ger Carey in action on stage proved as popular as ever. Ger has an amazing ability to portray the teenage mind with wit and insight.

The beginning of October saw our students enter the world of work for the first time. We are deeply grateful to all employers, local, national and international, who provide this experience for our students.

This proved, as always, to be very educational and students look forward to the next work experience 13-17 February, 2017.

Our table quiz team of Bradley Gray, Bronagh Gorham, Lochlann Healy and Jamie Birmingham won the county final in the Battle of Wits competition organised by the Longford Library. The team went on to represent the county at the regional final, but Rochfortsbridge won the day!

Mid October saw our students go to a Careers Day, Roscommon. This day proves to be the first time our students are made aware of all the options available to them when they complete their Leaving Cert. Colleges from around the country, and from abroad, are available at this event to offer prospectus' to those interested, and they also answer questions from students.

"Through my eyes" proved to be the big event of the TY 16/17 calendar. Ms. Libby Malone directed over three hundred students with the help of our T.Y group. All 96 students helped in the production. The teams were Management team, Sound team, Human Resources, Production, Choreography, P.R., Creative, Financial, Sales and Marketing, Hair and Make-up, Front of House, Costumes and Stage. Students applied for the different positions and were interviewed by Ms. Malone, Mr. Larkin, Mr. Burke and Mr. Broderick. Students rose to the occasion with admirable maturity and took responsibility for a show which proved to be an outstanding success. Teachers volunteered to facilitate the different groups in their roles and, indeed, some of our teaching staff took to the stage to perform, in what must be one of the best teacher acts ever at the school. Well done to everyone in our school community who co-operated in helping to make "Through my eyes" a memorable experience.

At the end of November, TY 1 and TY 4 went to Boda Borg, Lough Key Park, for a terrific day out. These students studied the subject Logic during the first two modules and they put their skills in logic to the test on this day.

All TY students are encouraged to take part in Gaisce, the President's Award organised by Mr. Dempsey. They are also encouraged to take part in the John Paul 2nd Awards organised by Ms. Nevin, Ms. Matthews and Ms. Towey.

Three members from Alcoholics Anonymous, came to speak with our group about their journey with addiction. This talk proved, as always, to be heartfelt. Our students responded with nature and with respect. Thank you to Mila, Paul and Peter for volunteering to speak with our students.

At the beginning of December, all the TY students went to Dundrum ice skating. A terrific day was had by all. We all returned safe and sound, and content with a great day together.

News of our musical, talented TY students spread and they were invited to Thomond Nursing Home, Irish Wheelchair Association dinner dance in the Rustic Inn and our local Day Centre to sing carols. These events



TY trip to Lilliput for the annual "bonding day".

proved to be very successful.

Martin Mulvey came to present the first day of his two-day First Aid programme to each of our T.Y. groups. The second day will follow after Christmas.

Our school chaplain Fr. Liam Murray moved into his new presbytery in time for Christmas. To celebrate the



Through My Eyes TY Show

event, the local Parish council organised a coffee morning, and some of our TY students helped at the event. We wish Fr. Liam a happy and contented time at his new abode.

TY students invited Evelyn Cusack to the school to open our school weather station. The TY students monitor the weather station and return the findings to Ms. Brady, Geography teacher.

The T.Y year finishes off for Christmas with the annual disco organised by T.Y.s on Thursday 22nd 11.20-1.15. Past pupil Stephen Donoghue will D.J. this event when our school community comes together in good humour and festive spirit to complete another calendar year at Mercy Secondary School, Ballymahon and to raise funds for Ballymahon S.V.P.

Credits: TY Show photos by Shelly Corcoran.



Through My Eyes TY Show

Sport



Soccer

The boys soccer teams are proud owners of two new sets of Jerseys which were kindly presented to our School by former past pupil Pauric Connolly of PC Cars.

Bryn Peters & Iarla O Sullivan attended a soccer coaching session hosted by Tottenham Hotspur FC in mid June.

First year girls held a lunchtime indoor soccer Futsal tournament organised by some of Mr Burke's 6th year LCVF class and Second year girls played an indoor Futsal competition organised by Mr Burke's 5th year LCVF class. In both cases the surplus proceeds have been donated to charity.

All 3 boys teams entered the National FAI Cup and both the Under 15's and Under 17's recorded impressive victories against Moyne Community School and Moate Community School respectively before departing the competition.

Turnout for training sessions has improved significantly and many thanks to those TY students who have helped with pitch marking and assembling goals.

Under 15's Boys Soccer

The squad, captained by Evan Chalmers has been given a huge boost this season thanks to a huge number of new 1st year students who are all vying for places on the matchday team. The team is going well in the league following a 5-3 win away to St Finian's College Mullingar and a 8-1 home win against Wilson's Hospital School.

Under 17's Boys Soccer

Captained by Jason Coughlan, the squad has had two impressive results in the league - a draw away to the current holders Scoil Mhuire Strokestown followed by a 10-0 victory at home to Templemichael College. The team has already qualified for the playoffs..

Under 19's Boys Soccer

Our Senior team, captained by Ros Claffey, are progressing well in the league after beating Mercy Kilbeggan 6-0 and Wilson's Hospital School 3-0.



Mercy Ballymahon Under 17 Boys Soccer Team

Thanks to their coaches Mr Burke and Mr Broderick.

Football

Senior Girls

The senior girls team failed to qualify for the Leinster championship quarter final despite winning two of their three group games. After two excellent wins the girls lost out to a very strong Athlone CC team. Well done to all the girls, and thanks to our Leaving Cert girls for representing the school so well in their time at Mercy SS. Well done also to team captain Rachel Dillon.

Under 16 Girls

The junior girls have qualified for the Leinster semi final after winning all the group games, including a very tough game against Eureka SS Kells. This team is captained by Ciara Healy and the vice captain is Roisin Leen - who did an excellent job when Ciara missed the last game due to illness. Leinster Semi final is 13th January against Cross & Passion College Kilcullen, Co. Kildare.



MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Under 16 Boys

Our U16 boys' football team were victorious over Cnoc Mhuire, Granard on a score line of 5-9 to 1-12 and St.Finian's, Mullingar 7-14 to 5-3 in the two rounds of this year's North Leinster competition. These wins put our team top of the group and they qualify for a North Leinster quarter-final in the New Year.



Thanks to Pauric Connolly, past pupil and owner of Pauric Connolly's Cars for very generous sponsorship of soccer kit for our team.

Pictured: Colm Burke, Evan Chalmers, Pauric Connolly (Sponsor), Jason Coughlan, Rós Claffey, Shane Broadrick. Photo by Shelley Corcoran.

Boys Basketball

Our U16 Boys Basketball team have had an exceptional season to date, qualifying for the All-Ireland 'C' Playoffs which will take place on Sunday the 15th of January in our school gym. All supporters are welcome to attend and hopefully our boys will be able to impress the home crowd.

The 12 man squad which is captained by Shane Mahon and coached by experienced mentor Mr. Dempsey, have 6 wins out of 6, no losses, averaging an impressive 50 points per game, doubling the oppositions scores in all games so far.

The team consists of: Shane Mahon, Jack Murtagh, Brian Kelly, Cian Belton, Ciaran Sheerin, Sean Kenny, Anthony Garland, Patrick Conlon, Harry Pender,

F a v o r
Ogunsakin, Kola
Olajide and
E m m a n u e l
Ovedje.

The U 19 boys basketball had a great start to the season with a great win over St. Pats of N a v a n . Unfortunately they narrowly lost out to O'Faich College Dundalk and therefore did not qualify for regional finals.



Boys Basketball Team

Girls Basketball

The U19 girls basketball team captained by Rachel Dillon had a good season with wins over Castleblaney, Scoil Mhuire Longford and Virginia Cavan. This meant the girls qualified for regional semi-finals but unfortunately they came up short to a very strong Dunshaughlin side and did not qualify for the finals.

Thank you to their coach Ms Carr.